

Report of the
Consultative Group on
the Needs of Scholars
at Small Universities

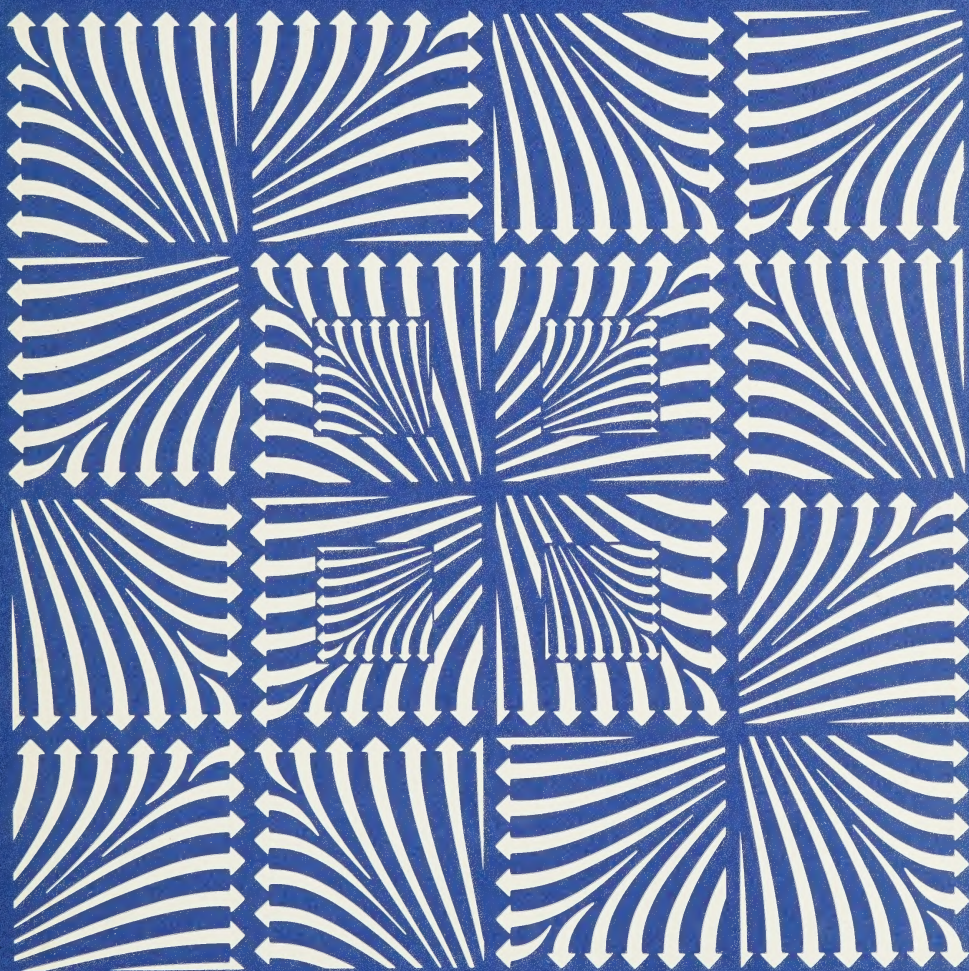
The Canada Council


Needs of Scholars at Small Universities

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Foreword

A Development Program was initiated four years ago as a result of the Council's conviction that it was time to play more than a responsive role in the life of the humanities and social sciences in Canada. The Council perceived the need to encourage within the academic community a process of stocktaking and self-analysis and also to help scholars identify serious gaps in research effort, in the hope of stimulating activity in those areas.

Recognizing the limitations of expertise in any bureaucratic organization and not wishing to dictate to scholars what they should be doing, the Council chose to work through the agency of Consultative Groups. Scholars, chosen for their experience and special knowledge, are being called together to study certain problem areas and report back to the academic community at large. They are also invited to make whatever recommendations to the Canada Council they believe are suited to its terms of reference.

Through these reports the Canada Council hopes that the academic community in Canada will learn something about its interconnections, its various common problems, its strengths and weaknesses. The Council, for its part, hopes to learn how it may modify its own programs to meet clearly-defined needs.

Over the past five years, it has become increasingly apparent to the Canada Council through analysis of the performance of universities that a number have not been able to take full advantage of Council programs. Unlike the case in the natural sciences, however, the disparity in research performance in the humanities and social sciences has not shown a clear regional focus. The discrepancy seems related more to size, geographical location and age of the university.

To determine how scholars at small universities themselves perceived and reacted to their seemingly common problem, we convened a widely representative Group to advise on the current research ambience in these universities and to suggest to the Canada Council the most effective means of assisting individual scholars working in them. We were fortunate enough to obtain the assistance of active researchers, university administrators and research administrators — and because new

programs introduced primarily for the benefit of small universities would necessarily require the active cooperation of the large universities, these too were represented in the Group, which was chaired by Edward Sheffield of the Higher Education Group, University of Toronto and a member of the Council's Advisory Academic Panel. The nine other members were Alan G. Arthur (Department of History, Brock University); R.-L. Desjardins (Director, Research Council, University of Moncton); Christopher K. Knapper (Teaching Resource Person, University of Waterloo)¹; Edgar Wright (Director, School of Graduate Studies, Laurentian University); John Clake (Department of Psychology, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and Vice-President, Undergraduate Programs, University of Winnipeg); Alexander Fancy (Department of French, Dean of Arts and Science, Mount Allison University); Normand Lacharité (Department of Philosophy, University of Quebec at Montreal); Antoine Sirois (Dean of Research, University of Sherbrooke); and Jean Gagné (Vice-Rector of Planning, University of Montreal).² Council staff who worked with the Group were Audrey Forster and John McKennirey.

The Consultative Group's thoughtful recommendations for new programs cannot be acted upon until additional funding becomes available, but at that time they will be given careful consideration, together with other new programs being devised to fill other identified needs, and they will be implemented in accordance with the priorities established in consultation with the Advisory Academic Panel and Canada Council. It remains for me, on behalf of the Council, to express the hope that this report will encourage and be of interest to those in the scholarly community who believe they are labouring under adverse conditions beyond their control. If so, our purpose in convening this Group will have been fulfilled.

Charles Lussier, Director
The Canada Council

1. Professor Knapper moved during the period of the Group's activity from the University of Regina to the University of Waterloo.

2. Professor Gagné was unable to complete his term with the Group, due to other commitments.

I Analysis of the Problem

Terms of Reference

We were originally asked to consider the needs of small universities. However, it soon became apparent that, although we would be examining a broad range of conditions at small universities, we would in fact be giving advice to a national granting body with a policy of making grants to individuals or groups, rather than to one providing large-scale institutional aid designed to transform a small university into an active research centre. We realized, moreover, that such an objective would not be acceptable to many at small institutions who wish to maintain their university's distinct character. It might also conflict with provincial views on what should be the nature and role of small universities. Consequently, we did not concern ourselves with making recommendations for changing the nature of small universities, but rather with analyzing and planning to alleviate the key problems of the individual scholar who is at a distinct disadvantage because of his situation at a small institution. Thus we became a Consultative Group on the Needs of Scholars at Small Universities.

By 'small' universities we mean literally those with an enrolment (in 1975-76) of fewer than 3,500 students. But we also include in our concern those universities in which there are scholars whose research needs are like those in small universities — new institutions, isolated institutions, even in some cases small departments in relatively large universities.

We realized from the beginning that any programs we might devise would be of interest to relatively few faculty members at each institution, since for many scholars in small universities (and in large ones too) research beyond what is required for their teaching does not appear to be a major preoccupation. However, such a statement implies a certain definition of research — one which we should make explicit here and now.

In his report, *Avoiding Stagnation in Small University Departments*, Colin Isaacs writes: In all but six of the departments visited, a significant number of faculty members were currently involved in some research activity. Most faculty members interviewed felt that research forms an essential part of any university department.¹ The same respondents were apparently quite prepared to admit that they interpreted the term 'research' in a broad sense. Dr. Isaacs writes:

“Research activity in the departments studied has a much broader definition than it would have in the most prestigious academic circles. Applied research, literature reviews, course development and small-scale experimentation figure prominently among the many activities that are being undertaken, yet they appear to be excellent alternatives to pure academic research. In fact most faculty members felt that such activities had greater justification than would academic projects and provided at least as great a stimulus for faculty members and students as would what several described as more esoteric projects.”

Our use of the word ‘research’ in this report must be taken in a narrower sense than the above. It would probably coincide with what is termed above ‘esoteric’ or ‘pure’ academic research, or what is commonly called advanced research, in the sense of research which is aimed at contributing to the advancement of knowledge in a given field, not to an individual’s own scholarly development or to pedagogical improvement.

None of the foregoing should be taken to suggest a lack of interest in advanced research on the campuses of small universities. On the contrary, respondents to our interim report from small universities not represented in the Group indicated both a strong desire on the part of scholars in small institutions to increase their participation in advanced research and a demonstrable confidence in the competence of their faculty to carry it out.² A number of universities urged us to advise the Council to foster the development of research institutes and other forms of research infrastructure on small university campuses. From within our own membership, we learned of recent initiatives to increase collaboration in research undertakings among the small universities within one region. Clearly interest runs high and skills are not lacking, and it seems that within some small universities a new research impetus may be developing. If so, we hope that introducing the programs recommended at the conclusion of our report might quicken this process. However, the emphasis on proposals for new developments should not obscure the fact that important scholarship has been carried out at small universities in the past, or imply that small universities should be steered against their will onto the research track.

Approach to the Task

We held two meetings, on October 1, 1976, and February 11, 1977, between which dates an interim report was circulated to all small universities not represented in the Group to elicit their reactions. Helpful responses were received from 12 of the 15 universities consulted. We also drew upon background documentation prepared by Canada Council staff and two other useful and relevant documents: the report of a workshop of the Social Science Research Council of Canada, *Problems of Social Science Research at Smaller Canadian Universities*,³ and an unpublished report to which we have already referred, *Avoiding Stagnation in Small University Departments*, by Colin F.W. Isaacs. Contained in the materials presented by Council staff were statistics on the age and rank of professional staff at Canadian universities, related to university size; participation and success rates in Canada Council programs, by university; representation of small universities on Council Leave Fellowship Selection Committees; salary ranges, by rank and university (Statistics Canada). Summaries of existing Canadian programs of scholarly exchange were provided, as well as detailed information on the summer seminar program of the American National Endowment for the Humanities.

Delineation of the Problem Area

At our first meeting, we had before us documentation prepared by Canada Council staff identifying 21 small Canadian universities where scholars had had below average success in both the Research Grants and Leave Fellowship Programs. (Several other universities have had consistent problems in the Leave Fellowship Program alone.) Even before convening the Consultative Group, the Council suspected that small universities shared a certain cluster of problems. The following impediments to research at such universities had already been hypothesized at that early date:

- 1) they lack a research tradition, because they are young universities;
- 2) teaching loads are heavy due to high undergraduate enrolments and often because of the large number of undergraduate courses offered;
- 3) they offer few graduate programs, resulting in a shortage of graduate research assistants and a lack of academic challenge;

- 4) they lack internal funds for faculty research;
- 5) secretarial assistance is inadequate;
- 6) library and archival resources are often woefully inadequate so that even elementary research materials are not available locally; data banks and other research facilities are lacking;
- 7) small departments mean that scholars have limited access to others in the same field and are thus denied the stimulus of exchange of ideas;
- 8) they are institutions in relatively isolated communities.

Though the Council realized these conditions were not endemic only to small institutions, it also noted that in its own programs small universities as a rule fared poorly relative to other universities. The difficulty in determining the real significance of university performance in Council programs was discussed at our first meeting, for an exceptional department within a faculty, or even a few outstanding individuals, can dramatically improve the university's showing in terms of both applications submitted and projects supported. With this in mind we recognized it would be pointless to try to draw hard and fast conclusions about 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' universities. We felt that the most accurate portrayal of the situation would indicate a continuum of universities, ranging from those with very poor to those with very good research environments, with the same research impediments being present, in varying degrees and circumstances, all along the line.

These reservations notwithstanding, we thought that the statistics which follow demonstrated a clear lag in ability to obtain funds for research on the part of faculty at small universities, although we did receive the warning in one response to our interim report that this lag need not be equated with a lack of achievement in research or scholarship in general. Without contradicting this view, we remained convinced (and were supported by the large majority of the small universities with whom we consulted) that small institutions did not provide an equal opportunity for research and that there was a serious need to redress the balance.

Figures 1 and 2 show performance by size of university in the Canada Council's Research Grants and Leave Fellowship Programs.⁴ The national average in participation rate (applications/number of faculty x 100) is indicated by the vertical line and given the value 100. The average in success rate (applications/awards x 100) is indicated by the horizontal line and also given the value 100. Points A represent small universities — whose enrolment in 1975-76 was below 3,500 students. Our concern focuses on the lower left quadrant which is below 100 on both scales. With respect to both participation rate and success rate, the majority of small universities fall within this quadrant.

Tables 1 and 2, giving the distribution of federal government research funds by size of university, are taken from the paper by John R. Hofley of the University of Winnipeg, *Social Science Research in Small Canadian Universities*, which appeared in the Social Science Research Council workshop report, *Problems of Social Science Research at Smaller Canadian Universities*, already mentioned. Table 2 in particular emphasizes the correlation between university size and the number of research dollars provided per faculty member.

Figure 1

Canada Council Research Grants

Participation and Success of Applicants

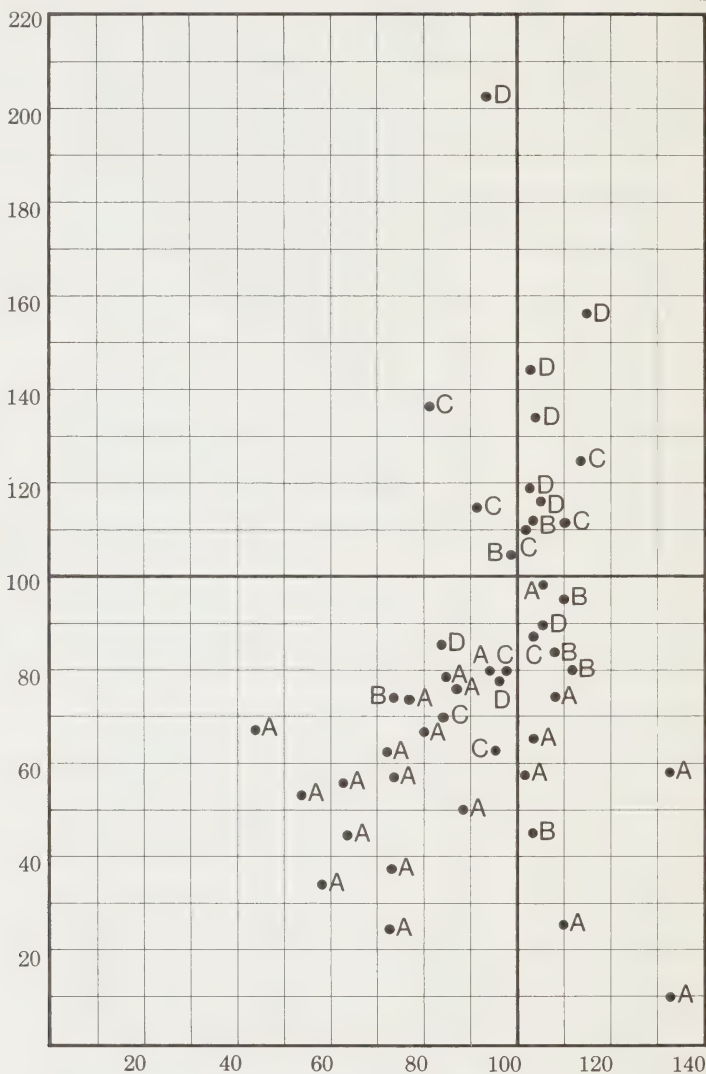
By Size of Institution of Affiliation (Indexed)
1971-1972 to 1975-1976

Total Full-Time
Enrolment
1975-1976*

Code:

- A 0 - 3,499
- B 3,500 - 7,499
- C 7,500 - 12,499
- D 12,500 and over

Participation Rate
(6.7% = 100)



Success Rate (75.3% = 100)

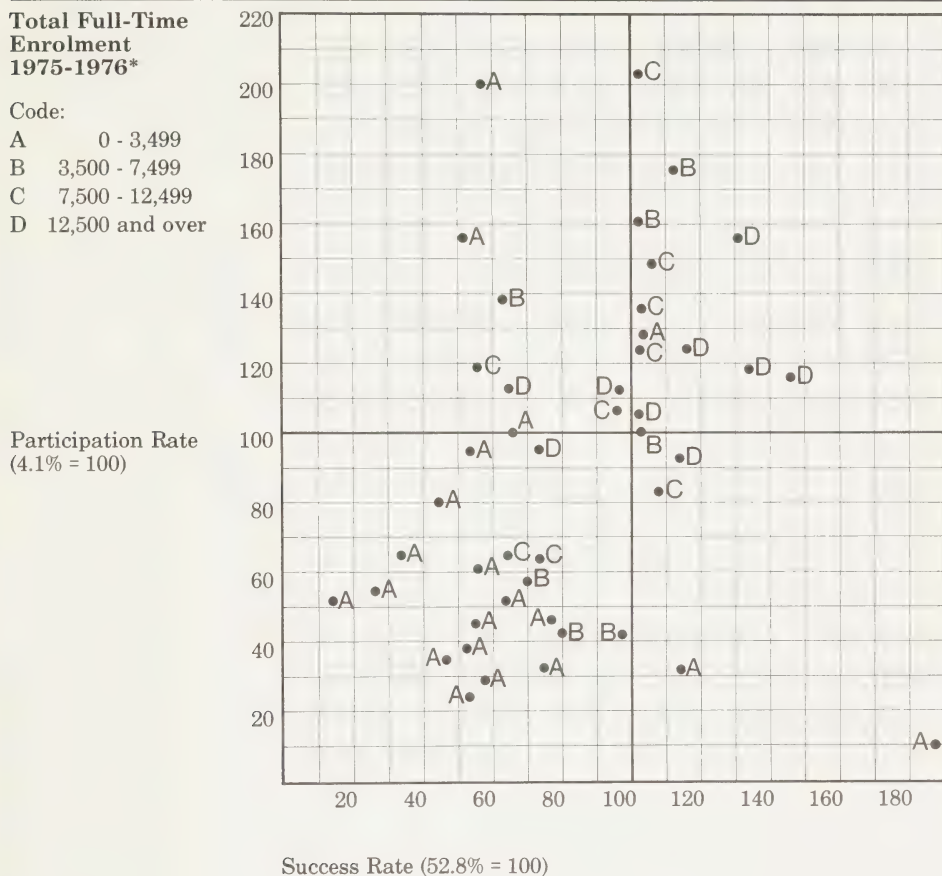
*Source: *Canadian Universities: A Statistical Summary*.
Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1976.

Figure 2

Canada Council Leave Fellowships

Participation and Success of Applicants

By Size of Institution of Affiliation (Indexed)
1971-1972 to 1975-1976



*Source: *Canadian Universities: A Statistical Summary*.
Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1976.

Table 1
Distribution of Federal Government Funds, by Size of School

Size of School (Full-Time Students)	No. of Schools	Federal Funds	% of Total Federal Funds	Funds for Social Science	% of Total Funds for Social Science	Funds for Social Science as % of Federal Funds
Over 10,000	9	\$ 60,454,013	58.00%	\$3,031,047	44.0%	5.0%
7,500 - 9,999	8	\$ 28,427,676	27.00%	\$2,416,402	35.0%	8.5%
5,000 - 7,499	3	\$ 5,584,234	5.00%	\$ 600,767	9.0%	10.8%
2,500 - 4,999	10	\$ 7,214,680	7.00%	\$ 578,712	8.0%	8.0%
1,000 - 2,499	13	\$ 1,809,054	2.00%	\$ 199,063	3.0%	11.0%
Less than 1,000	4	\$ 50,385	0.05%	\$ 16,448	0.2%	32.6%
Totals	47	\$103,540,042	99.05%	\$6,842,439	99.2%	6.6%

Sources: 1) *Directory of Federally Supported Research in Universities*, Vol. 1, 1973-74. National Research Council, Ottawa, 1975.
2) *Universities and Colleges of Canada*, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, May 1974.

Table 2
Distribution of Total Research Funds, by Size of School
Number of Full-Time Students and Number of Faculty

Size of School (Full-Time Students)	Total Research Funds	Total Number of Students	Dollars per Student	Total Number of Faculty	Dollars per Faculty
Over 10,000	\$60,454,013	139,983	\$431.87	11,756	\$5,142.40
7,500 - 9,999	\$28,427,676	68,764	\$413.41	6,552	\$4,338.78
5,000 - 7,499	\$ 5,584,234	18,557	\$300.92	1,752	\$3,187.35
2,500 - 4,999	\$ 7,214,680	37,541	\$192.18	3,632	\$1,986.42
1,000 - 2,499	\$ 1,809,054	23,282	\$ 77.70	2,144	\$ 843.78
Less than 1,000	\$ 50,385	2,680	\$ 18.80	241	\$ 209.07

Sources: 1) *Directory of Federally Supported Research in Universities*, Vol. 1, 1973-74. National Research Council, Ottawa, 1975.
 2) *Universities and Colleges of Canada*. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, May 1974.

Factors Affecting Research at Small Universities

1. Difficulties Arising from Historical Development

Frequently in our discussion of the causes of the present difficulties associated with research at many small universities, references were made to consequences of the rapid expansion of the 1960s and other aspects of their historical development. The demand for expansion was so pressing during that period that a policy of selective growth with a specific research orientation could not be achieved. Staff were hired without regard to research interests, and libraries were under pressure from a large new staff to expand holdings in a great many fields. The consequence was a lack of research focus, in both library resources and in personnel.

Furthermore, hiring pressures during this period caused the small universities, normally with relatively low budgets, to employ many staff who had not yet completed their PhD. These young staff members immediately assumed heavy teaching responsibilities in terms of both numbers of students and variety of courses. Consequently, they often required up to 10 years to complete their final degree, during which period their list of publications often remained noticeably short. In competition with older researchers and others with many more publications to their credit, these young and relatively inexperienced and unproven professors were bound to fare rather poorly in competitive grant programs.

The expansion of the '60s and early '70s also had an effect on the more senior personnel at small universities. At large well-established institutions administrative posts are frequently held by 'senior scholars' — older scholars with a distinguished career. Though their administrative tasks are admittedly heavy, they are normally provided with enough time to continue research during their term of office. In the small universities the pattern of operation has not been the same. Very heavy demands have been placed on the limited number of senior personnel available. Senior scholars have sometimes been compelled to abandon a research career in midstream in order to respond to the needs of the universities for administrators; and administrative posts have often had to be held for long periods, 10 years not being unknown. Limited numbers of personnel have meant limited opportunity for delegation of responsibilities. These scholars have tended to drift away from the research habit and even to dread the 'retooling' which would be required to resume academic pursuits.

Of course small universities existed before the days of expansion in the 1960s. They possessed a certain character, highly valued in its own right, arising out of an almost exclusive concentration on education in the sense of the formation of the complete individual. They were strongly affected by the influence of the humanities and espoused the universal rather than the specialized approach to knowledge. In the humanistic tradition, they emphasized a large degree of personal contact between student and professor. They conceived of the scholar primarily as teacher. When a university places emphasis on education in this sense of the formation of the complete individual rather than on the discovery of new knowledge, however laudable this objective may be, there will be clearly related consequences for research.

First, a certain number of senior professors at such universities belong to the teaching-oriented tradition and are largely without experience or interest in advanced research. Second, during the period of expansion when new universities were being staffed, the senior scholars from established universities who moved to the small new institutions would often have been those who wanted to assume the role they associated with small seats of learning — that of the scholar as teacher and mentor. They would, in fact, have consciously removed themselves from an increasingly high-pressured research-oriented environment. Both these factors, combined with the overuse of senior personnel in administrative posts, have tended to produce a leadership gap in terms of senior researchers at certain small universities.

2. Undergraduate Teaching

We believe that, in contact hours per week, teaching loads at small universities differ little from those at large universities, although for other reasons teaching constitutes a much greater factor in the professional life of scholars at small universities. Undergraduate teaching is generally not closely related to the specialized research interests of a professor. And at a small university, a wide range of undergraduate courses must be taught by a relatively small number of faculty. Courses are often rotated. As a result, a great deal of time is needed for course preparation which does not bear on the individual professor's research interests. The preponderance of undergraduate courses is coupled with the high value

placed by small universities on professorial contact at the undergraduate level. Easy access by students to faculty during working hours clearly cuts into time that might be spent on research.

Finally, at small universities, and especially at isolated ones, any additional programs outside the basic university curriculum — evening, spring and summer courses — are often given by the regular staff, additional or replacement staff not being available. Again this cuts into potential research time.

Our discussion of the heavy undergraduate teaching loads naturally raised the question of released time for research, but we acknowledge the fact that faculty claim this need with equal insistence at both large and small universities, and so we do not propose any special provision of released time for scholars at small universities. We do, however, believe that there are specific problems at small universities that make it difficult for them to release faculty from full teaching duties. These are generally the small size of departments, the difficulty of finding replacements due to geographical isolation and the absence of MA and PhD students to take up teaching loads.

3. Lack of Graduate Programs

Many, if not most, departments at small universities do not have graduate programs. This means that neither teaching nor research assistants are available. At one and the same time then, a scholar is heavily burdened by teaching and related duties and must conduct his research single-handedly. It was reported to us that at certain universities scholars in the natural sciences have had far more success in conducting research than those in the humanities and social sciences, mainly because of the availability of graduate students of science, through whom they are able to sustain the impetus of their work. This in turn makes it possible to obtain fairly continuous funding.

4. Internal Funds and Resources

The lack of university funds for research is a problem for some, but not all, small universities. Furthermore, it is a problem shared by a number of large universities. However, as a general rule only large universities have endowed funds at their disposal. Dalhousie University

and the University of Toronto are good examples of institutions which have considerable sums available for research from such sources.

It also seems to us that large universities often have two other kinds of internal research resources not available to small universities. In the first place, at large centres there are often research institutes which employ professors and students on a full-time basis for research, and which may have a support staff to which professors in departments can turn. Secondly, it is to large universities that governments and industries generally turn for contract research. Again this permits the hiring of research assistants and support staff. The net result is a higher level of research activity and better infrastructure on campus which the individual can tap in different ways. Small universities do, of course, have some funds available for faculty research. And the Canada Council has recently made such funds available on a limited scale (to both large and small institutions) through its General Research Grants.

We were somewhat surprised by the records of the first 18 months' operation of the General Research Grants Program. Certain universities have not been using all the funds granted; and among this group were as many small universities as large ones. Some universities appear to have not yet accommodated themselves to the availability of these research funds. One member of our Group reported that for the first year of operation at his university most of the funds disbursed were used for travel costs, while during the second year the money was used mainly for research assistants. The representative of another university insisted on the pressing need for seed money to enable inexperienced researchers to develop projects to the point where they would merit support by an organization such as the Canada Council and suggested that some universities might not be employing their funds adequately in this way for the development of younger scholars. In another case, concern was expressed that because professors found it easier to obtain funds internally they were not developing projects of sufficiently high quality to obtain external support. This raised the problem of how to relate the standards applied in making internal grants to those applied externally and, more generally, how to use internal funds to promote the best research within the university.

Besides the Canada Council's General Research Grants, contract research, research institutes and endowed funds, there is one other major potential source of internal funds for research, and that is a university's own operating budget. The question of university budget for research must of course be settled within each institution and probably depends to some extent on provincial government attitudes. We are aware that some small universities include allocations in their operating budgets for research and related travel; this is certainly something for all small universities to consider, if they are not already doing so.

5. Inadequate Secretarial Assistance

Secretarial assistance was reported to be at a premium in large universities as well as small. There are, however, a number of factors which multiply the difficulties at small universities. There is a smaller secretarial pool to draw on, meaning that at any one time there is less chance of finding a person free, and fewer persons to share large typing jobs. Again as a consequence of a smaller pool of resources, and particularly in isolated communities, it is harder to find secretaries qualified for specialized typing jobs such as foreign languages.

One of our members commented that small universities have been wasting the services of secretarial staff by employing them as receptionists. If secretaries were freed of receptionist duties and organized in pools, he suggested, they could provide much more assistance to researchers.

6. Isolated Communities and Small Departments

We recognize that even in large departments of large universities it is not uncommon for scholars to be without colleagues with the same research interests. We also recognize that good research can be done in relative isolation. Nevertheless, in our view the benefits of regular contact with at least one other scholar working in the area of an individual's research interest should not be underestimated, the advantages of communication and collaboration normally being very great; and these benefits are particularly lacking to scholars at small institutions.

For the scholar working alone in his university, the problem of isolation is severely compounded if he is working in an isolated community. From Brock University, for example, it is relatively easy to keep in contact with colleagues at McMaster, Toronto and York University. The same is not true for those at Laurentian or Lakehead University.

There are other problems specifically related to the type of isolation experienced by scholars at small universities which go beyond the lack of colleagues in the same field. Given the heavy teaching responsibilities that must be shared by a few, it is normally impossible to disengage professors at small institutions for full-time or even part-time research. Not only are there too few colleagues to take up the slack, but it is often very difficult to find replacements inside or outside the university. (Here doctoral students could be very useful.)

Moreover, the relative immobility and isolation of members of small departments at small institutions have serious implications with regard to academic 'visibility' or peer recognition. In large departments of thirty or more members, there will almost always be one or two faculty at any one time who are active outside the university at meetings and conferences, on research teams or evaluation committees. They will be in contact with others in the discipline and will naturally discuss the work of colleagues at home. Names of people in these large departments will be constantly broadcast through the 'invisible college' network. The same is not true in departments of five, with perhaps one or two members making one trip per year. We would suggest that this question of visibility may be critical in the Council's Leave Fellowship Program.

7. Research Climate at Small Universities

A promising research climate is created by an active group of researchers with a functioning research infrastructure (research assistants, secretaries, data sources), ideally in more than one discipline. The presence of visible ongoing research on campus stimulates interest in research and provides the opportunity for spin-off work or hooking on to existing work. Furthermore, it adds a dimension to the academic activity of the university that would otherwise be lacking to a large degree: with ongoing research, not only can theory be taught but methodology can be demonstrated.

We have already spoken of the leadership gap in terms of senior researchers at small universities. This naturally affects the research climate and is compounded by the relative youth of large numbers of the faculty at small and especially newer institutions. There appear to be two main reasons for this pattern of youthful staff: large-scale hiring of young scholars five to 10 years ago and the tendency of scholars to move from small to larger universities. We have no statistics on the movement of social scientists, but the report commissioned by the Canada Council's Consultative Group on Scholars in the Humanities from the Centre de Sondage, University of Montreal, points up a marked movement from small to medium- or large-sized universities, 28 percent of the respondents having made such a move.

The unfavourable research climate is a common but not universal problem among departments at small universities. And in those cases where research has been developing in such departments over the past decade a reverse problem is experienced by senior members of the department who hold administrative posts. These professors may have lost touch with the latest in theory and methodology in their field and will find it hard to return to research in departments where it is already well advanced.

The youth of small university faculties is in our view a major factor in terms of their research capability. While younger faculty members often bring with them an orientation towards research, there seems to be a certain amount of confusion on the part of young faculty members at small universities with respect to organizing and obtaining funding for their research. The problem is how to help these young scholars get started when there is relatively little ongoing research available as stimulus and as example.

8. Balance of Values

Before leaving the discussion of hindrances to research at small universities, we would be remiss not to emphasize again the fact that what are negative elements in the character of small universities, from one point of view, may well be positive elements from another. For one thing, at small institutions a great deal of importance is attached to teaching and student-professor contact. For another, the small department requires breadth and versatility of the individual faculty

member, which may serve him well not only in his teaching but in whatever research he does undertake. There is a balance of values involved in the academic life of the small university, just as there is in the large university. We reiterate our high estimation of the value of the role and character of small universities as they are now.

Regionalism versus Universality: The Question of Regional Specialization

A recurring theme in the background documentation and in our own discussion was the issue of university research policies and the related issue of library procurement policies. Both issues translated, for practical purposes, into the question of the desirability of a regional focus in the research of small and especially isolated universities. This question may be considered in three parts:

- 1) the value and dangers of regional specialization,
- 2) implementation of regional specialization, and
- 3) responsibility for regional specialization.

1. Values and Dangers of Regional Specialization

We believe that a university has an obligation to its community to study local problems and exploit local research resources where they exist. Moreover, this obligation is part of the university's responsibility to the nation.

Aside from the question of responsibility, there is the advantage of regional studies of maximizing limited resources. Savings can obviously be made in time and travel by working in close proximity to the university. It seems clear that at many small universities there are rich local resources available for research, e.g., the folklore collection at Mount Allison University, the Hudson's Bay Company records and the boreal forest archaeological sites at the University of Winnipeg. Here obligation and opportunity combine in a truly compelling way.

Finally, scholarship itself can often best be advanced, in certain disciplines if not all, by thorough-going scientific analysis of unique local phenomena, e.g., developmental economic studies in Newfoundland. Thus, in certain cases a scholar can build his own career and simultaneously advance his discipline by exploiting the potential of his immediate surroundings.

It is equally clear to us, however, that there are natural limits to the potential of regional studies and to their desirability. Such research excludes many disciplines, such as classics, philosophy, most literature and many fields of history, economics and political science. In general, regional studies involve the social sciences rather than the humanities.

We consider it essential that universities bear in mind, no matter what their size, their mission to be centres of universal knowledge and to offer students an exposure to the broad spectrum of learning. The intellectual heritage of mankind cannot be set aside to concentrate exclusively on local issues. In placing an overemphasis on regional specialization, a university would be in danger of failing in this mission.

2. Implementation of Regional Specialization

Before establishing policies aimed at encouraging regional specialization, a university must identify regional resources or characteristics which hold the potential for such research. Even then, such a policy cannot be easily implemented. If there are local library, archival or other data resources, they often require organization to make them accessible and additions to make them complete. A long-term library procurement policy must be developed which, while giving adequate attention to the needs of universal scholarship, gives clear priority to certain designated areas.

The natural resistance of scholars to changing their research interests must be recognized, and there are more than intellectual obstacles to be overcome in changing a research orientation. A reputation may be based on research in a certain field, and to enter another area involves the risk of not being able to obtain support. Certain measures may be useful in making it possible for researchers to shift their focus; but generally we believe the mechanism for creating a specific research focus amongst groups of staff members must be hiring policies. (Some departments have already begun to fill vacancies with persons whose research field includes or could include specific regional issues.)

Finally, we advocate caution in introducing a policy of specialization. Many departments of small universities have so few members that specialization in an area by two or three of them would place a great burden of teaching responsibility on the remaining members. Some universities do not have a special library, archive or data bank and cannot reasonably set out to create one. For such institutions, regional specialization may not be feasible. Research at these institutions would probably be best served by easy access to good data banks and libraries.

3. Responsibility for Regional Specialization

Does responsibility lie with individuals, departments, universities, provincial governments, funding agencies? We heard the view that, not to mention the impact of contract research, there is even now considerable pressure on universities from provincial departments to channel research into areas of provincial concern. For some universities the pressure to regional specialization is already becoming a burden.

Traditionally, the Canada Council, as a national granting body, has been unwilling to use its leverage to change the pattern of activity in provincial institutions. Moreover, it has always recognized that a very large part of its constituency is not engaged in the type of research likely to be included in priorities dictated by current interests.

On the whole, we do not wish to recommend any changes in this stance. However, wherever there is a desire to exploit local resources, encouragement should be given by the university and by funding bodies. (The program of research at Dalhousie University to study the marginal work-world of the Maritime provinces, funded by a Canada Council Negotiated Grant, might be cited as a prime example of this kind of activity.) At the same time individuals and universities should be allowed freedom to pursue their research interests.

II Towards Solutions

Contact and Access

Our first attempt to summarize key hindrances to research pertaining more commonly and specifically to small than large universities resulted in this list: lack of academic visibility, need for administrator recycling, paucity of local research resources, absence of research policies or priorities, absence of graduate research assistants, lack of a favourable research climate and little time freed from teaching-related activities. We included this list in the interim report which we circulated to small universities not represented in the Group. Almost all their responses gave general approval to our initial analysis of the particular difficulties encountered by scholars at small institutions; and their comments enabled us to refine even further our assessment of the key negative elements in the research situation at small universities.

Basically, scholars at small institutions are separated by a distance, both geographic and academic, from the active centres of research. They experience great difficulty in maintaining the participation and open communication necessary for truly advanced research. This isolation combines with the general youthfulness of faculty at small universities to produce a situation in which opportunities are missed, skills go undeveloped, and interest flags. We were ready to ask ourselves at this point what the Canada Council might do about the situation.

Some of the problems mentioned in the first paragraph in this section pertain primarily to a university's own affairs. For example, we felt that the problem of administrator recycling and even (with some reluctance) the problem of lack of time freed from teaching-related activities should primarily be a concern within the university.

When it came, then, to pinpointing *the key need of the individual scholar at the small university* which would be relevant to the Canada Council, we thought that it should be described as *the need for contact and access*: to be in contact with active researchers and to have access to ongoing research and research resources. The programs we recommend below hinge on these two points.

The Desirability of Identifying Two Categories of Universities

In planning programs aimed at alleviating the difficulties faced by researchers at small universities, two issues arose. The first was whether participation in these new programs should be restricted to a certain list of small universities. The second was whether there should be double standards.

The preliminary set of program proposals which the staff had prepared as a basis for discussion prescribed a division of Canadian universities into two groups. Initiative to participate in the programs was placed with the group of small universities in order to ensure them a relatively high rate of participation. Large universities were to be involved either through the exchange of personnel or as hosts to visiting scholars. A form of reciprocity between the two groups was written into the programs in order to make them as equitable as possible.

The argument for this arrangement was that without such a division any new programs would tend to perpetuate the status quo in patterns of participation and success rates. Resources would be absorbed in the same proportion as was currently the case and, although small universities would receive some benefits, they could be expected to suffer in the open competition in new programs to the same degree as in the old.

Arguments against this division, however, continued to mount throughout our work, particularly as the focus of concern was recast from small universities to *scholars* at small universities.

The question was raised whether one should assume that the proportion of potential researchers of ability, competence — and we might add interest — was the same in small as in large universities. We had no evidence with which to attempt to answer this question. Without an answer, of course, the significance of different rates of university participation and success in Canada Council programs cannot be interpreted exactly. It is clear that these rates reflect more than the presence of obstacles to individual researchers on small campuses; they relate in general terms to the nature of small institutions and should not be expected to change drastically without a corresponding and prior change in a university's whole

composition and dynamic. In sum, though low institutional rates of participation may indicate a problem, as we are sure they do in this case, they may not indicate the true dimensions of the problem.

Another argument against using two groups of universities was that such a division would essentially be artificial. The difficulties of researchers at small universities are the difficulties of researchers at many other universities, even the largest. What should be focused on, then, was not the university category but the problems, wherever they occur. This position gained ground when the real significance of differences in institutional rates of performance in Council programs was debated.

Finally, the argument was heard that a set of programs specifically for faculty at small universities, with the initiative for exchanges and visits in their hands alone, may not be enthusiastically received even at small universities. We felt there might be a great reluctance on the part of faculty at small universities to impose themselves upon a department in a large institution where an attitude of condescension might exist toward them.

Hazards of Instituting a Double Standard

We used the term 'double standard' to describe a system of judgment weighted by some means or other in favour of a subset of those in competition. Though this issue was occasionally raised for discussion in one context or another, we were consistently opposed to it.

In the first place, to give special consideration to applicants from small universities, all universities would have to be divided into two groups. To do this equitably would be almost impossible. There is simply no clear dividing line for universities, either by size or by performance in Council programs.

Equally important, however, as an argument against a double standard was the fact that restricting or weighting competitions to give an advantage to small universities would water down the standard of merit that could be enforced. This could only serve to create a rift between small and large universities and might even foster a definitely harmful attitude toward the quality of research at small institutions. We agreed that in the long run no

scholarly purpose would be served if certain programs were restricted to or weighted in favour of one group of universities and that injustices would necessarily follow from excluding a large number of universities from access to any given program.

We were still equally convinced that programs designed with the needs of small universities in view could be developed to encourage a higher rate of participation by their scholars.

**Program
Proposals
Designed To
Meet Special
Needs of
Scholars at
Small
Universities**

We are proposing two new programs, one to facilitate travel by research scholars to take advantage of resources not available on their own campus (Research Visits Program), and one to encourage familiarity with the organization and conduct of research projects (Research Workshop Program). In addition, we propose a modest modification of an existing program to facilitate visits by experienced researchers to small universities. Details appear under *Recommended Programs*, page 26.

These proposals emerged from a much longer list and from a great deal of discussion. While there is no point in giving a detailed history of this process, a few words on the evolution of the final proposals should help to explain why they appear in their present form and why other options were not taken up.

The Research Visits Program is an example of inverse evolution: instead of becoming increasingly complex it became increasingly simple.

Numerous plans for faculty exchanges were considered, but generally we felt that all exchanges involved a fairly complicated exercise in logistics and had limited research value, particularly if they carried with them a full teaching load. And part-time teaching duties, it seemed, would cause administrative headaches. If exchanges did not involve teaching, then they would in any event amount to a form of research visit. Also it was not certain that many small universities could attract exchange scholars, given their frequently isolated location and limited research resources.

A number of plans for bringing distinguished scholars to small university campuses for relatively long periods of time were also examined. Here the cost/benefit balance was not favourable. Each such visit would have involved paying a large salary replacement, an attractive honorarium and travel costs, while the actual contribution to research of the distinguished visitor would probably be limited to the very few scholars at the small institution who happened to be interested in his area of research specialization. We felt it would be cheaper and more useful for these few scholars themselves to do the travelling.

Long-term visits of professors from small institutions to other universities for six to 12 months were considered. This concept was dropped in view of the difficulties of scholars at small universities in getting a leave of absence from teaching and the fact that money spent for subsistence while away from home might more profitably be used to provide for a larger number of shorter visits, especially if distances were not too great.

So it eventually was decided to recommend a program which provides the maximum opportunity for scholarly contact while remaining as flexible as possible.

We should mention that a number of programs providing released time to scholars at small universities were ultimately eliminated on the basis already explained, the *special* need for such aid to small universities not being incontestably demonstrable.

The Research Workshop Program responded to a number of the ideas behind earlier suggestions. We had discussed the problem of launching into research, or reentering a field of research or changing from one field to another, any such initiative being made more difficult at the small institution by the absence of ongoing research, the lack of a suitable research climate and limited research resources.

The Summer Seminars for College Teachers Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities in the United States was considered as a possible model for a program aimed at overcoming these problems. This program, which is apparently very well regarded, is designed for teachers in American undergraduate and

two-year colleges to sharpen their understanding and improve their knowledge of their discipline. Programs of intensive reading and frequent meetings, led by eminent American scholars, are organized for a full two month period. An extensive follow-up program keeps participants in contact with the director for several years after the seminar.

We were well disposed towards this program but not convinced that seminars of such a long duration would provide the maximum benefit. Furthermore, though it was clear that such seminars could well be a necessary propaedeutic for research for some, they were clearly oriented towards improving the participants' professional development as teachers. Seminars of this type might tend to have a broader focus than would be useful for an individual's research.

The Research Workshop Program, on the other hand, emphasizes research methodology. It is designed to provide participants not so much with research results as with research skills. It is shorter in duration than the National Endowment's summer seminar and could be held at any time during the year.

Counselling on Research Proposals

We felt that on account of their inexperience and isolation scholars at small universities were more likely than others to need guidance in preparing research proposals. Members confirmed a common lack of familiarity with the details of the Council's Research Grants Program and expressed the opinion that faculty members often hesitated to apply for this very reason. It is worth mentioning, however, that given the way the program is administered, those who apply for research grants benefit from the experience even though they may be unsuccessful, especially as they receive the comments of the assessors.

Faculty members would probably be interested in information on such things as the assessor system, budgeting, the process of revision, average success rates. We concluded that there was a real need for systematic assistance to those who want to learn the basics about grant applications, whether to the Council or to other sources of support. We were told of some universities in which experienced research scholars assist their more

junior colleagues in planning their research on a one-to-one basis or in occasional group sessions, and we commend this practice to others. Another possibility would be to organize discussion of such matters at conferences of the learned societies. In addition, we urge members of Canada Council staff to continue to be willing to travel to the small universities, if invited, to explain Council programs. We suggest that after a number of such visits, a booklet might be compiled giving the information most commonly requested.

Recommended Programs

1. Research Visits Program

a. Purpose

The purpose of this program is to enable scholars at Canadian universities to visit other universities in Canada where their research can more effectively be carried out. With the ultimate objective of helping to provide equal opportunity for research, the program is intended to overcome the problem of a local deficiency of research resources.

b. Eligibility

Faculty members of Canadian universities with at least three years' full-time employment at a Canadian university would be eligible.

c. Provisions of the Award

The award would provide travel costs and subsistence allowance (\$30 a day for the first four weeks in a location, \$15 a day for additional time spent in that place) up to \$5,000 over a period of 18 months for the purpose of visiting another Canadian university or universities. Salary replacement while away from home would not be paid. Funds would be disbursed through the award holder's university and would have to be accounted for by receipts, as far as possible, and a signed statement by the award holder and one person at the host university *per visit* that such a visit was made for research purposes.

d. Applications

Applications should include:

- 1) a curriculum vitae;
- 2) a description of the plan of research indicating any work which may already have been accomplished;

- 3) a detailed description of the research advantages (library, faculty, facilities, etc.) of the university or universities to be visited which relate directly to the plan of research and a statement of the limitation of appropriate local resources;
- 4) evidence that each university to be visited is aware of and amenable to the visit or visits, and that the scholars to be consulted have been contacted and are available;
- 5) the schedule of work indicating the number and tentative dates of visits to be made and their duration (All major changes in this plan will have to be submitted to the Canada Council for prior approval.);
- 6) signatures as currently required on applications to the Canada Council, indicating that the applicant's university is aware of the application and that research resources are as stated therein.

e. Adjudication

The program would operate as a competition. Adjudication would involve two main elements: 1) the intrinsic merit of the research project and 2) the degree of 'need' taken as a function of the resources available locally. There should always be representation of small universities on the adjudicating committee. The announcement would be made that only a limited number of such awards were available. Advertisements would indicate that successful projects would involve a coherent and worthwhile plan of research and show clear justification, in light of the purpose of the program, for visiting the proposed host university or universities.

f. Examples

An applicant could make one or two visits for stays of several months at a host university or a series of short visits if such would be more useful. He might make use of the award to participate in an ongoing research project at another university. (If this project is supported by the Canada Council, there should be no overlapping budgeting of funds for the travel of the holder of the Research Visits Grant.) A visit might be made primarily to consult with other scholars, or to consult research materials, or both. For instance, a scholar at a university where there is a rich resource of folklore materials, but where there is no local expertise to exploit this resource, might apply to be able to visit outstanding folklorists elsewhere. Again, it may be the research materials, such as medieval texts, which are not available locally.

- g. Estimate of Costs Since awards would have a ceiling of \$5,000, the estimated maximum cost of the program can be determined exactly by stipulating the number of awards to be made each year. Perhaps, during the first year of operation, 25 awards could be made. This figure could be revised in the light of the first year's experience.

2. Research Workshops Program

The premise on which this program has been developed is this: seldom do those who are not actively engaged in research have the occasion to attend meetings where research *methodology* is the focus. The purpose of conferences is generally to disseminate research findings, so that conferences are thematically oriented to concentrate on the exposition of new aspects of the object of study. But what is most needed by the researcher in an early or new stage of his career is discussion and demonstration of methods and techniques or a clear understanding of the main problems currently facing advanced researchers in a field. It is proposed that workshops be organized for this purpose. The program is intended mainly to serve the needs of scholars in isolated situations such as prevail frequently at small universities.

- a. Purpose The proposed workshops have a dual purpose. First they are intended to stimulate and advance research by focusing on research methodologies or key problems in advanced research in a field. Second they are intended to introduce 'nascent' researchers, primarily at small universities, both to the methodology of research and to the group of colleagues across the country who have been involved in the same field of study.

- b. Conditions of the Award A workshop would be organized to deal either with methodological aspects of research or with a key problem area within a discipline or an interdisciplinary field. Ongoing research could be presented, inherent problems described and advice invited. Exposition of methods and techniques could be given.

In terms of participants, the workshop should be composed of two groups: those advanced in research, acting as resource persons, and those preparing to undertake research. To be eligible the latter must be faculty members with at least three years' full-time employment at a Canadian university. Workshops would

normally be held at the university of the organizer or director.

The participants other than the director and the resource persons would be required to submit within three months a substantial (five to 10 page) written report on the relationship of the discussions at the workshop to their own research development, in order to permit the Council to assess the value of the program.

c. Size and Duration

In general, workshops may run for three to 10 days and involve up to 15 participants, two or three of whom should be experienced researchers (resource persons) invited by the director.

d. Provisions of the Award

Awards provide for travel and lodging for participants and direct costs of staging the workshop (e.g. photocopying, postage). The director of the workshop would receive an honorarium of \$250 in recognition of his contribution to the organization of the workshop, and the director and each resource person would be paid \$100 a day for the duration of the workshop.

e. Application

The initiative for a workshop may be taken by any interested party (an individual, department, university, learned society, the Canada Council itself, etc.) in the academic community within the humanities and social sciences. Those who hope to benefit from a workshop could be its initiators, provided they were able to make prior arrangements with an experienced scholar ready to assume the responsibility of workshop director. An application to the Council for support of a workshop would give the focus of the meeting, indicate the materials to be presented and provide details regarding the persons proposed as director and resource persons. After administrative vetting of the application, as is currently carried out for Canada Council Conference Grant applications — including external assessment by at least two specialists — the workshop would be announced to all universities to invite interested scholars, especially those at small universities, to apply within 4 weeks to the Canada Council. Meanwhile organizational work for the meeting could begin. All eligible applications from those wishing to participate (other than as director or resource persons) would be accepted until quotas were filled. An application would include:

- 1) a curriculum vitae
- 2) signatures as required for a Research Grant
- 3) a statement of past research and research interests
- 4) the names of two referees asked to send letters of recommendation.

f. Estimate of
the Cost of
Each Workshop

Travel	15 participants at \$250	\$ 3,750
Accommodation	15 participants at \$30 a day for 7 days (as an average)	3,150
Director's honorarium	\$250 + \$100 a day	950
Honoraria to resource persons (2 or 3)	3 at \$100 a day	2,100
Organizational expenses	\$200	200
Total		\$10,150

g. Experimentation

In order to test this program only one or two workshops should be supported in the first year, but the number could be increased in subsequent years. The number and mix of participants in a workshop could be varied to arrive at optimum arrangements.

3. Research
Consultants

Not only is it desirable for scholars at isolated or disadvantaged universities to travel to other centres, but it is also worthwhile to bring expertise to their own campuses. Although we did not endorse the idea of a large-scale distinguished visitors program, we did wish to preserve the concept of bringing leading scholars to other campuses to give on-site advice. We recommend that all universities be given a standard supplement of perhaps \$1,000 to \$1,500 to their General Research Grant, specifically earmarked for bringing research consultants to the campus for short visits.

III Conclusion

We should like to transmit to the Canada Council our appreciation and the appreciation expressed in many of the letters we received from small universities for the Council's concern and initiative in setting up the Group. We trust the Canada Council will consider carefully the programs we have recommended to provide the kind of assistance which seems to us most needed.

IV Notes

1. Colin F.W. Isaacs, *Avoiding Stagnation in Small University Departments*, A Report Prepared for the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies, February 11, 1976. The Report was based on interviews with 39 small academic departments in Ontario universities, 19 of them in small universities.
2. It is interesting to note that 48.6 percent of faculty (1975-76) at small universities hold a PhD (Statistics Canada).
3. Herman Overgaard (Ed.), *Problems of Social Science Research at Smaller Canadian Universities*. Report of a workshop sponsored by the Social Science Research Council of Canada, Montreal, October 16, 1974.
4. The following institutions participate individually in the Canada Council General Research Grants Program, but are not included in the calculations for Figures 1 and 2 on pages 6 and 7: Brescia College (University of Western Ontario), Campion College (University of Regina), College of Cape Breton (St. Francis Xavier University), Collège Dominicain de Philosophie et de Théologie, Huron College (University of Western Ontario), King's College (Dalhousie University), King's College (University of Western Ontario), Nova Scotia Technical College, Collège Sainte Anne, St. Jerome's College (Waterloo University), St. Thomas More College (University of Saskatchewan), Trinity College (University of Toronto), St. Michael's College (University of Toronto), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto).

V Appendix

Full-Time Enrolment at Canadian Universities/1975-1976¹

Acadia	2,761	Prince Edward Island	1,463
Alberta	19,452	Quebec, Chicoutimi	1,124 ²
Bishop's	806	Quebec, Montreal	10,320 ²
Brandon	1,066	Quebec, Rimouski	672 ²
British Columbia	19,115	Quebec, Trois-Rivières	2,476
Brock	2,389	Queen's	10,065
Calgary	10,803	Regina	3,181
Carleton	9,120	Royal Military College	652
Concordia	10,102	St. Francis Xavier	2,201
Dalhousie	7,057	St. Mary's	2,441
Guelph	9,195	St. Paul's	375
Lakehead	2,107	St. Thomas	778
Laurentian	2,888	Saskatchewan	10,064
Laval	14,353	Sherbrooke	5,594
Lethbridge	1,336	Simon Fraser	5,866
Manitoba	14,406	Toronto	31,876
McGill	15,851	Trent	2,220
McMaster	9,805	Victoria	5,511
Memorial	6,181	Waterloo	14,172
Moncton	3,094	Western Ontario	17,623
Montreal	14,610	Wilfrid Laurier	2,969
Mount Allison	1,386	Windsor	7,001
Mount St. Vincent	1,335	Winnipeg	2,849
New Brunswick	5,901	York	12,501
Ottawa	10,421		

1. Source: *Canadian Universities, A Statistical Summary*. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1976.

2. Source: *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook 1976*, Volume 2. Figures refer to academic year 1974-75.



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